

Good morning Chairman Nesbitt and Members of the committee. My name is Tom Horton and I am the Government Affairs Manager for Waste Management's Michigan - Ohio – Indiana Area. I am speaking today in support of HB5205.

PA 295 of 2008 helped Michigan define its position as an environmental stewardship leader. HB5205 seeks to update PA295 to keep pace with the rapidly changing renewable energy landscape. New technologies that communities, states and corporations will seek to deploy in the future are under development. These technologies produce energy by taking unwanted materials that currently go to landfills and converting it to electricity or a solid or liquid fuel. HB 5205 seeks to recognize these technologies as “advanced cleaner energy systems” that produce renewable energy.

General Motors recently announced that its Detroit headquarters achieved landfill free status by precycling, recycling and converting non-recyclable material to electricity at Detroit's waste to energy plant. The ability of other companies to duplicate GM's success will be enhanced by the technologies HB5205 seeks to include.

Nothing better illustrates how the table is being set for new processing technologies to displace landfills than what is happening in Michigan. Landfill volumes are down approximately 30% from their 2004 peak. In the last five years, several landfills have closed or filed for bankruptcy. Last year the operator of the Adrian landfill ceased operations citing “a lack of trash.” Before the end of the year, expect additional Michigan landfills to cease operations due to declining waste volumes. The new processing technologies cited in HB5205 will be housed in facilities that look like industrial plants. They will be designed to operate in a reduced waste volume marketplace and will extract energy value from the materials they process.

Michigan landfills will continue to play an important role for several more decades as recycling expands and waste processing technologies are perfected and adopted. The changes proposed by HB5205 demonstrate to companies that want to invest in building these plants that Michigan is ahead of the curve in recognizing and encouraging investments in waste processing technologies.

The proposed legislation compliments the Governor's recently announced recycling initiative, which recognizes the growing commodity value of waste products and the desire of citizens and businesses to expand sustainable solid waste processing solutions. It is important to note that this legislation does not seek tax incentives, grants or public monies to encourage the construction of these technologies. The overwhelming benefits of the new processing technologies, and their ability to meet demand for sustainable waste processing solutions, guarantees that they will be constructed in states that communicate their desire to see them built through legislation like HB5205.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.

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